

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MARYLAND
NORTHERN DIVISION**

Adam Pickett,

Plaintiff,

V.

HZB Financial Services, Inc.; and
DOES 1-10, inclusive,

Defendants.

Civil Action No.: _____

COMPLAINT

For this Complaint, the Plaintiff, Adam Pickett, by undersigned counsel, states as follows:

JURISDICTION

1. This action arises out of Defendants’ repeated violations of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692, et seq. (“FDCPA”), and the invasions of Plaintiff’s personal privacy by the Defendants and their agents in their illegal efforts to collect a consumer debt.

2. Supplemental jurisdiction exists pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367.

3. Venue is proper in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b), in that the Defendants transact business in this District and a substantial portion of the acts giving rise to this action occurred in this District.

PARTIES

4. The Plaintiff, Adam Pickett (“Plaintiff”), is an adult individual residing in Smithsburg, Maryland, and is a “consumer” as the term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(3).

5. Defendant, HZB Financial Services, Inc. (“HZB”), is a Georgia business entity with an address of 1415 Highway 85N, Suite 310-308, Fayetteville, Georgia 30214, operating as a collection agency, and is a “debt collector” as the term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6).

6. Does 1-10 (the “Collectors”) are individual collectors employed by HZB and whose identities are currently unknown to the Plaintiff. One or more of the Collectors may be joined as parties once their identities are disclosed through discovery.

7. HZB at all times acted by and through one or more of the Collectors.

ALLEGATIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL COUNTS

A. The Debt

8. A financial obligation in (the “Debt”) was incurred to a creditor (the “Creditor”).

9. The Debt arose from services provided by the Creditor which were primarily for family, personal or household purposes and which meets the definition of a “debt” under 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(5).

10. The Debt was purchased, assigned or transferred to HZB for collection, or HZB was employed by the Creditor to collect the Debt.

11. The Defendants attempted to collect the Debt and, as such, engaged in “communications” as defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(2).

B. HZB Engages in Harassment and Abusive Tactics

12. HZB called the Plaintiff numerous times per week in an attempt to collect the debt with the intent to harass.

13. HZB continued to call the Plaintiff after the Plaintiff told HZB that he was represented by an attorney.

14. HZB threatened the Plaintiff with criminal prosecution.

15. HZB failed to notify the Plaintiff of his rights under state and federal law by written correspondence within five (5) days after initial contact, including the right to dispute the Debt.

C. Plaintiff Suffered Actual Damages

16. The Plaintiff has suffered and continues to suffer actual damages as a result of the Defendants' unlawful conduct.

17. As a direct consequence of the Defendants' acts, practices and conduct, the Plaintiff suffered and continues to suffer from humiliation, anger, fear, frustration and embarrassment.

18. The Defendants' conduct was so outrageous in character, and so extreme in degree, as to go beyond all possible bounds of decency, and to be regarded as atrocious, and utterly intolerable in a civilized community.

COUNT I
VIOLATIONS OF THE FDCPA 15 U.S.C. § 1692, et seq.

19. The Plaintiff incorporates by reference all of the above paragraphs of this Complaint as though fully stated herein.

20. The Defendants' conduct violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692c(a)(2) in that Defendants contacted the Plaintiff after having knowledge that the Plaintiff was represented by an attorney.

21. The Defendants' conduct violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692d(5) in that Defendants caused a phone to ring repeatedly and engaged the Plaintiff in telephone conversations, with the intent to annoy and harass.

22. The Defendants' conduct violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(4) in that Defendants

threatened the Plaintiff with imprisonment if the Debt was not paid.

23. The Defendants' conduct violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(7) in that Defendants falsely misrepresented that the Plaintiff had committed a crime, in order to disgrace the Plaintiff.

24. The Defendants' conduct violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(10) in that Defendants employed false and deceptive means to collect a debt.

25. The Defendants' conduct violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a)(1) in that Defendants failed to send the Plaintiff a validation notice stating the amount of the Debt.

26. The Defendants' conduct violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a)(2) in that Defendants failed to send the Plaintiff a validation notice stating the name of the original creditor to whom the Debt was owed.

27. The Defendants' conduct violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a)(3) in that Defendants failed to send the Plaintiff a validation notice stating the Plaintiff's right to dispute the Debt within thirty days.

28. The Defendants' conduct violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a)(4) in that Defendants failed to send the Plaintiff a validation notice informing the Plaintiff of a right to have verification and judgment mailed to the Plaintiff.

29. The Defendants' conduct violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a)(5) in that Defendants failed to send the Plaintiff a validation notice containing the name and address of the original creditor.

30. The foregoing acts and omissions of the Defendant constitute numerous and multiple violations of the FDCPA, including every one of the above-cited provisions.

31. The Plaintiff is entitled to damages as a result of Defendant's violations.

COUNT II
VIOLATIONS OF THE MARYLAND CONSUMER DEBT COLLECTION ACT
MD. CODE COMM. LAW § 14-201, et seq.

32. The Plaintiff incorporates by reference all of the above paragraphs of this Complaint as though fully stated herein.

33. The Defendants are each individually a “collector” as defined under MD. Code Comm. Law § 14-201(b).

34. The debt is a “consumer transaction” as defined under MD. Code Comm. Law § 14-201(c).

35. The Defendants threatened criminal prosecution against the Plaintiff, in violation of MD. Code Comm. Law § 14-202(2).

36. The Defendants repeatedly contacted the Plaintiff with the intent to harass or abuse, in violation of MD. Code Comm. Law § 14-202(6).

37. The Plaintiff is entitled to damages proximately caused by the Defendants’ violations.

COUNT III
INVASION OF PRIVACY BY INTRUSION UPON SECLUSION

38. The Plaintiff incorporates by reference all of the above paragraphs of this Complaint as though fully stated herein.

39. The *Restatement of Torts, Second*, § 652(b) defines intrusion upon seclusion as, “One who intentionally intrudes...upon the solitude or seclusion of another, or his private affairs or concerns, is subject to liability to the other for invasion of privacy, if the intrusion would be highly offensive to a reasonable person.”

40. Maryland further recognizes the Plaintiff’s right to be free from invasions of privacy, thus Defendants violated Maryland state law.

41. The Defendants intentionally intruded upon Plaintiff's right to privacy by continually harassing the Plaintiff with repeat phone calls, including calls after learning the Plaintiff was represented by an attorney, as well as threats of criminal prosecution.

42. The telephone calls made by the Defendants to the Plaintiff were so persistent and repeated with such frequency as to be considered "hounding the plaintiff" and "a substantial burden to her existence," thus satisfying the *Restatement of Torts, Second*, § 652(b) requirement for an invasion of privacy.

43. The conduct of the Defendants in engaging in the illegal collection activities resulted in multiple invasions of privacy in such a way as would be considered highly offensive to a reasonable person.

44. As a result of the intrusions and invasions, the Plaintiff is entitled to actual damages in an amount to be determined at trial from the Defendants.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, the Plaintiff prays that judgment be entered against the Defendants:

1. Actual damages pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(1) against the Defendants;
2. Statutory damages of \$1,000.00 pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(2)(A) against the Defendants;
3. Costs of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(3) against the Defendants;
4. Actual damages pursuant to MD. Code Comm. Law § 14-203;
5. Actual damages pursuant to MD. Ann. Code. Bus. Reg. § 7-401(b);
6. Statutory damages pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3)(B) & (C);

7. Actual damages from the Defendants for the all damages suffered as a result of the intentional, reckless, and/or negligent FDCPA violations and intentional, reckless, and/or negligent invasions of privacy in an amount to be determined at trial for the Plaintiff; and
8. Such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

TRIAL BY JURY DEMANDED ON ALL COUNTS

Dated: October 1, 2010

Respectfully submitted,

By /s/ Forrest E. Mays

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